

VZCZCXRO2753
PP RUEHNH
DE RUEHNH #0078/01 2460221
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 020221Z SEP 08
FM AMCONSUL NAHA
INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0986
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0981
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0097
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 1046

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAHA 000078

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP MEENA KORFF
DEPT FOR CA/PPT/SIA PAULA CARTER
TOKYO FOR CBP/ED BAYRON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC CMGT CPAS JA
SUBJECT: NAHA HOSTS SIA MILITARY PASSPORT COURIER TRAINING

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: ConGen Naha in coordination with State Department Special Issuance Agency (SIA) and Department of Defense hosted a Military Passport Agents' Training Conference on Camp Foster Marine Base August 19-20 in Okinawa, Japan. Over 40 military passport agents from military installations throughout Japan, Korea and Hawaii, and staff from U.S. Embassy Seoul, Tokyo and ConGen Naha participated in the training. The conference also provided an occasion for Consul General Ray Baca to conduct public outreach in Okinawa on new Visa Waiver travel rules and facilitate a meeting between SIA and the largest military passport courier in Okinawa. END SUMMARY.

MILITARY COURIERS PROVIDE AN INVALUABLE SERVICE

¶2. (U) Naha is home to approximately 50,000 U.S. service members and their families. Passport acceptance agents from 6 military installations throughout the island accept official, no-fee dependent and tourist passport applications. Couriers deliver the applications for tourist passports to the Consulate on a weekly basis.

¶3. (U) During the two-day conference, U.S. Embassy Tokyo Consul General Ray Baca reminded participants of the valuable role passport couriers play in providing quality customer service to our military members and their families. On Okinawa alone, monthly military couriers accept approximately 80-100 applications for official passports and 100-200 for tourist passports. The U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Birth Registration Office administered oaths and aided in preparation of more than 1000 Consular Reports of Birth Abroad applications in 2007. Through offering courier services, the military saves couples with newborn children the trek to the Consulate to fill out this vital paperwork. Without these services, applicants would need to appear in person at the Embassy or Consulates and customer service would suffer, Consul General Baca told conference participants.

CONFERENCE A HUGE SUCCESS

¶4. (U) Conference participants noted the two-day training provided an excellent opportunity for State and DOD personnel to exchange ideas and techniques for improving customer service and better handling the needs of our service members and their families. The conference included sessions on the Foreign Clearance Guide, passport application forms and acceptance procedures, and laws affecting issuance of passports to children.

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION LENDS A HAND

¶5. (U) Edward Bayron, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Assistant Attaché assigned to Embassy Tokyo attended the

conference. With over a decade of experience on immigration matters, Bayron provided insight on immigration issues and U.S. border management. In addition to detailing the role of CBP and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) overseas, Bayron explained entry procedures and requirements for new Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) and immigration rules that apply to U.S. citizens, visitors and green card holders.

¶ 16. (U) Outside of the conference, CBP's Bayron and Consul General Baca were interviewed by the Ryukyu Shimpo newspaper on the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) for Visa Waiver Program travelers set to take effect January 12, 2009.

CAMP FOSTER'S IPAC IS BACK ON TRACK

¶ 17. (SBU) ConGen Naha's largest military passport courier Marine Corps Base Camp Foster Installation Personnel Administration Center (IPAC) has faced continued difficulties in obtaining official passports. In early 2008 IPAC was not in compliance with all the requisites to fully process official passport applications to the satisfaction of SIA. This led to some of the applications being rejected. In April 2008, CONOFF and Consul General Baca met with representatives from IPAC to discuss the issue. Since that time, IPAC sent two Marines in May to attend the SIA passport courier training in Washington. From June, a new director assumed management responsibilities at IPAC. CONOFFs met with IPAC leadership again on August 1, 2008, to discuss the issue and also scheduled a meeting between IPAC leadership and trainers from SIA and DOD for August 20, 2008.

¶ 18. (SBU) On August 20, representatives from IPAC, SIA, ConGen Naha, AmEmbassy Tokyo and DOD discussed outstanding issues

NAHA 00000078 002 OF 002

related to IPAC's processing of official passport applications. SIA reiterated their requirements for the approval of official passport applications. They also requested that official travel orders accompany all applications. In order to meet the needs of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) if travel orders are not available at the time the passport application is submitted, SIA advised IPAC to send a justification letter stating the nature of the travel and the justification for the official passports. SIA agreed to monitor passport applications submitted by IPAC and direct lines of communication were established between IPAC and SIA.

¶ 19. (SBU) The meetings were particularly useful in moving all the parties toward a resolution of the issue. ConGen Naha will continue to offer support and training to IPAC. Two employees from IPAC attended the August SIA training, and will serve as backup passport acceptance agents. After the conference, the trainers toured the IPAC facility, met individually with 3 of the 4 IPAC military passport agents and the director of IPAC to review official passport application policy and discussed some specific cases which had been rejected. COMMENT: U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Foster is home to the Marine Corps Command for all Marines assigned to Japan. The Marine Expeditionary Unit is considered the "911" emergency force for the Pacific and Marines are often called upon to react to situations throughout the Pacific in a short period of time. It is critical Marines assigned to the MEU who require and are authorized to obtain official passports can do so in a timely manner. Their duties often require them to be able to deploy via MIL or CIV air on short notice. END COMMENT.

CONTINUED TRAINING IS NECESSARY

¶ 10. (U) COMMENT: Post would like to thank Paula Carter from SIA and Eugenia Doran and Megan Ogborn from DOD for their invaluable training. It is critical new service members assigned to military passport agent offices receive adequate training. Given the large number of military passport couriers throughout Japan and Korea, post strongly recommends SIA and DOD consider annual training held in Japan and/or Korea. END COMMENT.

MAHER